



Lift Up Your Eyes

As Jesus sent out the disciples two-by-two every place He was about to come, He commanded them to lift up their eyes and look at the fields.

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." John 4:34-35

A good farmer must know the condition of his fields in order to successfully produce crops. Jesus was instructing them to do what they knew was essential in any endeavor—that of really knowing what needed to be done, before setting out to do the task. Part of the task of praying involves praying on site, literally putting our feet in the place God has called us to minister.

James 5:16 reads,

¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. We read here that the prayer prayed by a righteous man, fervently, is effective. When we open our eyes, and pray on site with insight, we can pray specifically. As we see the condition of the lost, our hearts are stirred to pray with urgency and desperation. Specificity fuels fervency. And, we have read in James 5:16, God responds to the fervent prayers of the righteous.

SO WHAT IS PRAYERWALKING?

We know God holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, called in the Bible the keys of David.

In Isaiah 22:22 we see,

²²I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Matt. 16:17-19 tells us,

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter,^[1] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^[2] will not overcome it.^[3] ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be^[4] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[5] loosed in heaven." As believers, we are given these keys of the kingdom of heaven to bind what does not belong and to loose what does belong in God's kingdom.

Since the time of the fall of man into sin, Satan operates as the prince the power of the air. He blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot even see the light of the gospel and keeps them bound in his kingdom of darkness. He does this by finding a "place to stand"—finding a point of entry through sin or disobedience. Satan establishes what we refer to as "strongholds" in the mind. These are simply mindsets impregnated with hopelessness which accept as unchangeable something we know is contrary to the will of God. This mental fortress become his base of

operation in order to kill, steal and destroy. But praise God, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil! God is able to transfer us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light of His dear Son, Jesus. He can replace our heart of stone with a heart of flesh, tender toward the gospel. Our job in the place of prayer is to use the authority we have been delegated by God to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. We bind or remove the blinding of the enemy over the minds and eyes of unbelievers so that they may hear, see and understand the gospel as it is shared with them, thus they are free to respond. God calls us to prepare the way for the Lord—one way we do this is through prayer, binding and loosing in His authority. We then loose the Holy Spirit to draw their hearts to God, to help them step out in faith trusting Jesus as Savior and making Him Lord of their life.

***God cuts through gates of bronze and bars of iron**—Isa. 45:1-3 says,

¹ "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ² I will go before you and will level the mountains ^{1a} ; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. ³ I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.

No matter how difficult or even impossible any situation may seem, nothing is impossible with God. No person is too far from salvation, if we pray in faith, believing and then obey God's instructions to us.

***Jesus sets before us an open door that no man may shut**—In Rev. 3:8 Jesus says,

⁸ I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

***We have authority from Jesus to bind and loose**—as Jesus tells us again in Matt. 18:18

¹⁸ "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be^{1a} bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^{2a} loosed in heaven.

***We need to bind the strongman**—In Matt. 12:25-30 we read

²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

³⁰ "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

It is urgent that we are prepared to gather as God brings people to us. Only then is the harvest conserved for the kingdom of heaven. As we go about prayerwalking, we must have a plan for gathering where they respond and disciplining quickly so that none of the precious harvest is lost.

Let me share a story from India with you. One young enthusiastic evangelist set about to travel through an entire area, showing the Jesus film hoping to evangelize the area and see churches planted. Before he began, he had done a survey trip through these villages and was excited to learn that, contrary to most of India, these villages had no idols, although there were not yet believers in any. He went from place to place, making a large circuit. His intention was to circle back, doing follow up, gathering and establishing churches. As he doubled back, he quickly saw new fellowships established but got bogged down in the process. It was a long while before he could make it back to the villages he had visited at the earliest part of his work. When he did finally get there, he saw to his great dismay that newly-erected idols had sprung up in these villages where he had been slow to work at gathering. He had been like Jesus said, "like one who scattered" unintentionally, because the enemy of our souls had been at work to retake ground lost to him through the initial outreach. According to Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus told us,

⁴³ "When an evil¹¹ spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

It seems that this was an example of what happens when we fail to fill the "cleaned house" quickly—even in areas where no idols had been previously, satan had managed to bring others to reclaim what had been temporarily claimed from him. We must be prepared to gather, not to be like one who scatters. And, we must fill the area with believers full of the Word, and the Spirit of God.

But, prayerwalking is a powerful tool! Let me tell you another story--

The Story of a Young Nepali Evangelist

A young Nepali church planter became greatly burdened for his people, the Newar, a Buddhist group who lived in one section of Kathmandu, the capitol of Nepal. At this point, there were few believers or fellowships among this group. He really identified with the concept of prayer walking and committed himself to faithfully prayerwalk every street and lane in this section of the city. As he began to walk, amazing things began to happen! First, as he saw friends and acquaintances who were believers, they asked what he was doing. When he explained the vision God had given him for walking and praying over his people and the area in which they lived, they also began to join him. Soon there were believers from 4 or 5 other churches nearby who were daily praying and walking in this area. Unbelievers began to come to them and ask questions. Before the first month of this process ended, more than 19 small fellowships of 9-12 new believers each had formed in this area, meeting to worship, pray, and prayerwalk together. Leaders from the churches who were helping Prabek began to help disciple all the new believers and to help train them in meeting, growing in the Lord, and prayer walking. Now 2 and a half years have passed and more than 450 fellowships have been formed in this area, formerly a very resistant area but now the Gospel is flourishing. New believers begin by learning how to pray and how to continue this process of praying and walking, believing for the salvation of the other Newars, not only in this area, but all over Nepal and beyond.

*When we prayerwalk, we always:

*Go with a partner—Jesus sent them out two by two.

*We always have a prayer shield—a group of intercessors praying for us as we prayerwalk.

*We always pray specifically: *Specificity yields fervency and fervency brings results.*

*We always only do only what we see the Father doing.

Let me tell you another Story of an Indian evangelist and his experience with prayerwalking.

Prayerwalking is God's way of our exercising His authority and releasing His power for spiritual breakthroughs!! For example, in the past few years in India, a young evangelist had begun to put this into practice. As he was prayer walking, he was also noticing the places of idolatry and the pagan temples, and noting them on his map as he prayed and walked. A year passed and he continued to go throughout this area, praying and walking, believing God for the breakthroughs. He was amazed when he realized that the number of idols and temples in the area had already greatly diminished since his first year of prayerwalking. He resolved to continue pressing on, believing for God to completely remove these as he continued to prayer and walk.

In the Old Testament, the story is told about the tabernacle of Moses which was the place where God met with His people. Inside this tabernacle, was the ark of the covenant, the wooden chest, overlaid with gold, covered by the mercy seat, overshadowed by two cherubim with upraised and outstretched wings between which the presence of God rested. Inside the ark were a pot of manna, the heavenly bread God provided for his children in the wilderness, the tablets of the ten commandments given by God to Moses, and Aaron's rod which had budded. Normally, the ark of the covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and only the high priest was allowed to enter this place and then only once in the year. When the Israelites went into battle, they had taken the ark, hoping that by having God's very presence with them, they would be victorious. However, we see that the ark was captured. In the Bible we are told the story of the Ark of the Covenant captured by Philistines and brought into the temple of Dagon, their huge pagan stone idol, in 1 Samuel 5:2-4.

² Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. ³ When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴ But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained.

Finally, the Philistines, in fear of the power of God, sent the ark of the covenant back to Israel once again. The idol fell down in the presence of the Holy God—there was no power greater than the God of Heaven and Earth.

In the same way, the ark of the covenant is a picture of the believer who is following Jesus. Although we are ordinary humans like the ordinary wood of the box, we are clothed in robes of divine righteousness, like the overlay of gold on the box. The blood of Jesus covers our sins. God promised to write His laws in our hearts rather than on tables of stone. He is the Living Bread which came down out of heaven and of which we partake every day as we feed on Him and His Word. He has given us His authority, as represented by Aaron's rod. And, as we praise and

worship Him, we have seen that we prepare His throne of habitation in our very lives and hearts. So, when we, in obedience to His direction, go out to set our feet in the places to which He has sent us, we carry His very presence upon us. It is His power in and on us that topples idols, breaks strongholds, and sets the captives free every place we set our feet.

THE PURPOSES OF PRAYERWALKING INCLUDE:

Worship--

- To recognize and exalt God where He is not yet known or praised; and,
- To extend His kingdom.

We prayerwalk for spiritual warfare in order to:

- Call on Jesus to release captives bound in spiritual darkness 2 Cor. 4:4 says, *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
- We prayerwalk to ask God to contend with evil, knowing He alone is able to bring all things into submission.
- We prayerwalk as a prophetic action to possess by faith the inheritance, ushering in His kingdom. Luke 10:1 tells us, *“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two¹¹ others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”*
- And finally, we prayerwalk to give a foretaste of worship that will be when He comes to reign among all peoples. We know from Rev. 7:9-11 that there will one day be representatives from every tongue, tribe and nation before His Throne worshipping. We are part of His process of bringing that to pass.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF PRAYERWALKING?

First, we must Prepare:

Study the area, lifting up our eyes to see: who lives there, how many are there, where are the significant sites requiring spiritual breakthroughs, doing a demographic study, and discovering spiritual strongholds that Satan is using to keep people bound in darkness. We must present ourselves to God as His instruments, lifting up our eyes: being alert for the ‘people of peace’ as we walk.

Second, we must Partner:

Pray/prayerwalk with a partner. Always have a ‘prayer shield’—others who are praying for you as you pray/prayerwalk. Debrief together at the end, recording insights.

Third, we must Praise:

Begin by praising God of all creation and focus on Him and what He is showing you. Bind Satan from hindering, distracting, or attacking and bind your own thoughts, loosing the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to do only what the Father is doing.

Fourth, we must Pray:

Bind the strongman and loose the Holy Spirit’s activity. Be discreet and pray the Word. Minister to those God may bring across your path, if God permits. Remember, Matt. 18:18 says,

¹⁸ "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be¹¹ bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be²¹ loosed in heaven.

Begin to Take Possession Through Prayerwalking

We can remember the main things we need to pray by thinking about the fingers on our two hands. With the five fingers on our right hand, we can remember:

5 PRAYERS TO PRAY:

- ✦ Our thumb on the right hand reminds us to pray for Open Heavens—Isa. 64:1 says,
*¹ Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would tremble before you!*

We might pray this scripture back to God in this way:

"Father, please open the heavens and let your presence come to this area where you have sent me to minister. Send out the Holy Spirit to prepare the way. Let your very presence change this place forever."

- ✦ Our forefinger on our right hand reminds us to pray for Open Hearts—for Young and old, men and women—Acts 2:17-21 promises,
¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."¹¹

You might pray this scripture back to God in this way:

"Father, pour out your Holy Spirit on the men and women, young and old, in this place. Show forth signs and wonders and let those bound in darkness be set free by the power of your spirit."

- ✦ Our middle finger reminds us to pray for Open Homes—That Every home would become a house of worship—Acts 2:46-47 tells us
⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

You might pray this scripture back to God like this:

"Father, establish houses of worship and the word here in this place. Let your presence come and rest here and cause there to be families who welcome your message of good news and salvation today. Add to the church every day those who are being saved. Empower me to be your bold witness."

- ✦ Our fourth finger on our right hand reminds us to pray for Open Highways—for God to Prepare a highway of holiness for His presence—Isa. 40:3–5 shows us,
³ A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD ¹¹; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ¹² ⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

You might pray this back to God like so:

"Father in Heaven, I cry out to you to remove places of stumbling, raise up places of despair and oppression. Prepare this highway of holiness for your presence and for the gospel here. Let mountains of obstacles be laid low—and open wide the pathway for messengers of good news to come. Let your glory be revealed!"

- ✦ Our last finger on our right hand reminds us to pray for Open Hands—For the workers themselves—In Matt. 10:7,8, Jesus commanded us,
⁷As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near. ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, ¹¹drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

This may be prayed something like this:

"Father, let me be your hands and feet to these precious souls where you have sent me. Put your love in my heart toward these who need to know you so desperately. Help me bear a bold witness faithfully every day as you open doors. Work with me confirming your word with signs and wonders following. Raise up many more laborers for this harvest field and help me to join hands with you and each of them to accomplish the task you have sent me to do"

The five fingers of our left hand help us remember the
5 PLACES TO PRAY:

- ✦ The thumb on our left hand reminds us to pray for places of Government—For Righteousness, justice, wisdom—Rom. 13:1 says,
¹Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Prov. 29:2 tells us,

² When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.

And, 1 Tim. 2:1–3 reminds us,

¹I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior,

You might pray for government in this way:

“Father, establish righteousness in government here in this place. Put those in authority who rule in justice and with wisdom. We pray for all those in authority to rule well so that we may live quiet lives in all peace and godliness. Help us be faithful to pray for our leaders daily that they may come to know you and walk in your ways.”

- ✦ **The second finger on our left hand reminds us to pray for places of Education**—pray for Truth, godliness, wisdom to be taught and for children to be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord— Prov. 22:6 tells us to...

⁶Train ¹²¹ a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Pray for education like this: “Father thank you that you love and care for children. Help teachers and parents to train children to walk in your ways, to know and honor you. Give them wisdom and grace to minister in your love to children. Let your Truth be known and honored in every place of education.”

- ✦ **The middle finger on our left hand reminds us to pray for places of Business**—for Honesty, integrity, for working as unto the Lord, and for the blessing of prospering— Prov. 28:8 reminds us that...

⁸ He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor.

Pray for business like this: “Father you call us to work as unto you. Help business people to be people of honesty and integrity. Let your blessing rest upon them as they walk in your ways. Help them to prosper that they may bless those less fortunate and those in need as well as sharing your blessings to help extend your kingdom. Let them know you as their Source and protector.

- ✦ **The fourth finger of our left hand reminds us to pray for places of Religion and Culture**—2 Cor. 4:4 says:

⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Pray “Dear Lord, we ask you to remove blinding and to give a revelation of God, to cause people to have hungry hearts for the Truth. Bring them to an end of themselves. Let them search for you and find you when they search with all their hearts. Let those gifts you have put within this people be offered as worship to you. Help them to put away things which are not in line with your character and your ways. Thank you that you are worthy of all worship and praise—let your glory cover the earth, in this place, as the water covers the sea.”

- ✦ **Finally, the last finger on our left hands reminds us to pray for places of Community Gathering**—This includes places of sports and other events, meeting halls, and so on. Pray for None to perish, for unity in diversity, for compassionate concern for one another, redemptive gifts recognized & glorifying God, Pray for the community’s transformation through more and more living according to God’s Kingdom principles.

As we prayerwalk, we want to Survey the harvest field and harvest force—Let's look at Numbers

13...In Num. 13:1-3, we read,

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." ³ So at the LORD's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

As the people of Israel had come to the border of the land of promise, God told Moses, their leader, to send out people to see what the land was like. We see following in these scriptures the names of those who were sent to search out the land. Then, in Numbers 13:17-21, we read

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land." (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.) ²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo ¹¹ Hamath.

These were the details they were to investigate. They surveyed the land of promise before they went in to possess it.

In John 4: 34-35, we see Jesus and his disciples in Samaria. The disciples were focused on finding food for themselves, but Jesus rebukes them and tells them,

³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Just so, as Jesus sends us out to the harvest field He has assigned to us, we need to "lift up our eyes" also, to really SEE what is before us.

Have you ever been walking along, looking at the ground, totally unaware of the people and things around you? Many of us walk this way, completely self-absorbed. Jesus wants us to "lift up our eyes", to really look, really see what is there!

As we survey the Harvest Field:

Look for Where, How Many, and What Kind of Strongholds Must Be Broken?

- Use a map to mark:
 - Churches, temples, idols, occult centers, pilgrimage points
 - Areas of crime or immorality such as bars, prostitution areas
 - Historic sites of bloodshed or pagan rituals
- Use a calendar to mark times of:
 - Festivals, rituals, pilgrimages, etc.
- Use a timeline to mark the periods in history and places of:
 - Historical events, battles, community woundings/offenses, disasters, etc.

These things can give you clues as to how to direct your prayers, and will give you insight into the keys to the hearts of the people to which He's called you. Ask God for wisdom to know what to do with the things He is showing you.

Also, see *Where, How Many, and What Kind of Churches Must Be Planted?* Our goal, remember, is a fellowship of believers within reach of every person geographically, linguistically, culturally and socially.

Consider, then:

- Population size and density;

Do people live tightly packed together in apartment blocks, or sparsely settled across mountain ranges?

- What is the Geography—

Is the terrain open and easy for access or is it difficult and remote?

- What People Groups or Groups that call us "us" and them "them" are there according to their
 - Ethnicity
 - Their Language
 - Their Religion
 - Their Culture and,
 - Their Society.

Are there caste systems which divide even the same linguistic group into smaller subdivisions? Within which groups will they marry? Or, Eat together?

- Natural Resources,

Is this a land of abundance where materialism and preoccupation with wealth exist or is this a land gripped with poverty and desperation? Are there resources which are not used or poorly used?

And what are their

- Felt Needs.

What do the people themselves feel are their most urgent needs—for food and shelter, for justice and equality, for success, power and wealth?

As God reveals these things to you, you can begin to pray according to the Word of God for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth, among these people, as it is in heaven, beginning by using you to make a difference!

Look also to see what

Harvest Force may already be present:

Where, How Many, and What Kind of Partners Are Already At Work? Look for:

- ✦ Expatriate and local workers
- ✦ Churches/fellowships
- ✦ Prayer networks
- ✦ Agencies
- ✦ Bibles schools
- ✦ Individuals
- ✦ Those producing tools, and,

✦ ALL Great Commission Christians!!

We have learned the importance of lifting up our eyes to really see the harvest field and harvest force in the place God has assigned to us, our field, our vineyard. We know how to begin—in God’s presence, exercising His authority and beginning to possess the promises by praying and walking throughout the areas He is sending us. Jesus has promised to work with us, confirming His word with signs and wonders following. Be confident, as you obey His commands, that He will indeed bring a mighty harvest through you as you faithfully obey.



Look for Bridges

Jesus left His home in heaven, took on the form of a servant, and became one of us. Even His name, Emmanuel, means “God with us”. We are sent out to follow Jesus’ example—to take on the form of a servant, of a learner, and to become one of those to whom we are sent.

Paul said, in 1 Cor. 9:22,

“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

All people were created by God for relationship with Him. There is an empty place in our hearts which only God can fill. Yet, all too often, the Gospel is perceived as a Western religion, or a foreign religion. Still there is a longing for answers only God can provide. Even the great Ghandi of India once said, “I want to drink the Gospel from an Indian cup.”

God has set eternity in their hearts Ecc. 3:11 tells us,

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

God has put bridges for the Gospel in every people and culture. We must be good detectives to look for these bridges as we share the gospel message with those who do not yet know Him.

Here are examples of bridges for the gospel from the lives of other missionaries:

✦ Wm. Carey & the upside down tree

William Carey, a British missionary to the nation of India in the 1800’s grappled with the difficulties of presenting the Truth of God’s love and sacrifice through His Son Jesus Christ to those from Hindu backgrounds. As he searched for a way prayerfully, he learned of an Indian story that told of an upside down tree, whose roots were in heaven but whose branches stretched down to the ground. In its side was a gash from which the sap flowed for cleansing from sin. The fruit of this tree was for the healing of the nations. Carey saw the similarities of this story picture and the Gospel story of Jesus, who was God sent down to earth as a man, whose side was pierced, whose blood flowed for forgiveness of our sins, and whose fruit heals the nations. Carey was able to share in a way the people of Indian could understand and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

✝ Don Richardson & the peace child

Another missionary in this century working among tribal groups in Papua New Guinea, Don Richardson, really met with a great challenge. When he told stories of Jesus and His disciples, Judas was the hero to these tribal people who valued treachery above everything else! What could he do! But he prayed and studied. One day, in the midst of a tribal war, he heard of the chief of one tribe giving his son to the chief of the warring enemy tribe. He learned that this child was called the “peace child” and that from this time out, the two tribes would be reconciled together, without any further alienation because of this tremendous sacrifice of their leader. Likewise, he realized that God Himself gave His only son, so that there could now be peace and reconciliation between all of mankind and Himself. He was now able to present the good news in a way these tribal people could understand and relate with.

✝ Hudson Taylor & the Gospel in Chinese characters

In the past century also, Hudson Taylor, a famous missionary to the nation of China also struggled to find clear relevant ways to share God’s love. As he studied the Chinese language and their characters, he saw that the character for righteousness was “the lamb over me”—a picture of Jesus, Lamb of God, over my life—my righteousness. He began to study and found many many similar examples of the Gospel within the Chinese characters themselves, providing a cultural bridge for the Chinese to the story of God’s love and redemption.

God assures us, in James 1:5,

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

God will teach you and show you the bridges for the Gospel among those to whom He sends you. Pray in faith believing and look diligently as you lift up your eyes to the harvest.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 – A GUIDE TO CULTURE

If I speak with the tongue of a national, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I wear the national dress and understand the culture and all forms of etiquette, and if I copy all mannerisms so that I could pass for a national but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor, and if I spend my energy without reserve, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love endures long hours of language study, and is kind to those who mock his accent; love does not envy those who stayed home, love does not exalt his home culture, is not proud of his national superiority,

Does not boast about the way we do it back home, does not seek his own ways, is not easily provoked into telling about the beauty of his home country, does not think evil about this culture;

Love bears all criticism about his home culture, believes all good things about this new culture, confidently anticipates being at home in this place, endures all inconveniences.

Love never fails; but where there is cultural anthropology, it will fail; where there is contextualization it will lead to syncretism, where there is linguistics, it will change.

For we know only part of the culture and we minister to only part.

But when Christ is reproduced in this culture, then our inadequacies will be insignificant.

When I was in America, I spoke as an American, I understood as an American, I thought as an American; but when I left America I put away American things.
Now we adapt to this culture awkwardly; but He will live in it intimately; now I speak with a strange accent, but he will speak to the heart.
And now these three remain: cultural adaptation, language study, and love.
But the greatest of these is love.



AS GOD'S MESSENGERS, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THOSE TO WHOM WE ARE SENT.

We must communicate the Gospel in a way unbelievers can understand and respond to. God is not willing that any should perish. *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."* We can gain an understanding of their understanding of the world by asking powerful questions as we build relationships. Listening is the main skill required—listening to others, listening to God.

- ✦ What is their basic understanding of life after death? Of Suffering/of evil? What is their idea of love?
- ✦ How do they process the information they receive? Is it processed Logically? Relationally? Emotionally?
- ✦ How do they express themselves? Are there Dialects? Is there a Religious language?

For example, with Tibetan language, there are many different dialects. And, there is a high formal language which is only used for important religious communication—the language itself is worshipped. If something is truly important and religious, it must be in this language. However, only the monks who are trained in this language can read and understand this. So no common person could read this. But if something religious is communicated in the common language, people do not respect or revere it or consider it important. A real challenge for Bible translation!!

- ✦ What is their behavior? What are their Religious rituals? Their Customs? Their Etiquette?
- ✦ How do they receive information? Is it through Leaders? Through Stories? Through Songs or chants? Through Rituals? Is it Read? Do they hear it on Radio? Or TV?
- ✦ How do they decide what is right and wrong? It is through Taboos? Through their Family? Through the Community? Are they free to change their values?

By prayer, listening, and asking God for wisdom, we will discover keys to the hearts of those to whom we have been sent. God will help us to see and use these "bridges for the gospel" in order to touch their hearts and reap the spiritual harvest for His glory.

DISCIPLES SEEK TO RECLAIM REDEMPTIVE GIFTS FOR GOD'S GLORY.

God designed man in His image—to have unity in diversity. Every group of people has been entrusted with gifts unique to them which are intended to be offered as worship to God thus bringing Him greater glory. Sin has marred and twisted these redemptive gifts. God calls us to reclaim them for His glory by removing:

- ×Idolatry
- ×Immorality
- ×Independence
- and, ×Injustice

But our goal is to bring the seed of the Gospel so that it may take root in the culture and worship of God may be expressed in their own unique way, in spirit and truth as a glory to Him.

In Matthew 13:31-32, Jesus told a parable about the Kingdom of Heaven. It reads,
³¹He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

The Gospel is like this tiniest of seeds—it is so simple that even a little child can understand and receive it. But, when planted, it grows and flourishes into a huge tree that even birds can nest in. Often, however, we want to take that tree that has grown up in our culture, and uproot the entire tree, bringing it, birds and all, to the new people and culture. Rather, than, as we should do, simply bringing that seed of the Gospel and planting it in the native soil of the people and culture so that it can grow up as a native plant there, producing its own crop and bringing glory to God in its own unique way in the new culture.